



March 20, 2009

Town halls are a success!

Greetings friends and neighbors,

Today is the first day of spring and we're now finished with the tenth week of session, and there are just 37 days left. Last weekend, I had the pleasure of meeting many of you who came out to one of my three town hall meetings. We started in Yelm, followed by town halls in Spanaway and Orting, and turnout was phenomenal at all three events! **I thank all of you who attended for coming out and getting involved in your state government, and hope to see more of you at future town halls!**

My only regret about the town halls was that Representative McCune and I didn't get to spend enough time at each location. I wanted to stay longer and continue discussing state issues with you, but as soon as we were finished at one location, we had to pack up and hurry to the next!

At all three events, it was clear that topic number one on everyone's minds is taxes...are we going to raise your taxes? I've been voting against nearly every tax bill that comes up. Many of the bills that we vote on have what are called "I-960" implications, which usually denote a new tax increase and therefore require a 2/3rds majority of the Senate and House to pass. **I'll continue to do my best to keep taxes to a minimum** because all of us are struggling through the current economic situation.

It is vitally important that you get involved and stay involved in what's going on here in the state capital. You are the ones who need to tell us what to do. If you enjoyed the town hall and want us to come talk to your friends and neighbors, or if you couldn't attend a town hall but heard about it and want to know more about what's going on, **please don't hesitate to contact**

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me! If you believe strongly in something, call, write, stop by or e-mail me with your thoughts or concerns. I welcome all of your suggestions. Remember...this is your government!

New state revenue forecast

A lot of you who attended my town halls were worried that the state is losing revenue and won't be able to afford to continue some of the programs that you rely on. The fact is that while revenue is actually increasing, state spending is increasing as well, and at a faster pace than revenue. **Over the last several years, state spending has grown 2.5 times faster than revenue.** That fact, combined with a number of other factors in state government, has led our state into the largest budget deficit in state history.



The state Economic Revenue Forecast Council announced yesterday that our projected budget deficit for the 2009-11 biennium is nearly \$9 billion. **However despite some dire predictions about the state of our economy, all is not lost!** In fact, the message I've been trying to make clear still rings true. If the Legislature were to freeze state spending at its current level, then factor in the automatic carry-forward costs and caseload increases, the deficit falls

to just over \$4 billion. If we use some of the \$3 billion in federal stimulus money our state will be getting and possibly dip into the \$700 million in the state's rainy day fund, we could bring the deficit down even lower.

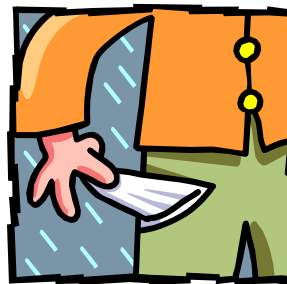
It's all a matter of choices, and right now the majority party has the power to make the right choices or the wrong choices. **We're five weeks from the end of session, and nobody has seen an operating budget proposal from the majority party in either the House or Senate,** although they're supposed to be releasing one next week. I'm anxious to see if they've decided to make the right choice by reducing the size of state government, making programs more efficient and proposing a truly sustainable budget, or if they've decided to make the wrong choice by continuing the ups and downs of the budget roller coaster, this time by slashing programs in the hopes that you, the taxpayers, will be willing to "buy back" certain items with more tax increases. [You can read more about this in an editorial I wrote with Sen. Mike Carrell, R-Lakewood, in the Tacoma News Tribune.](#)

Economic survival fair

I wanted to tell you about something that I think could be a great opportunity. **Thurston County is holding an Economic Survival Fair at Olympia High School next month.** According to

organizers, if you've just been laid off, had your hours cut, are struggling to pay the bills, or just need information, the Economic Survival fair is the place to start.

Some of the free, on-site services you can take advantage of include child care, legal advice, parenting classes, haircuts, care packages, financial literacy classes, job search advice, interview clothing tips, healthy meals on a budget, services for the elderly, EITC screening, transportation, family support services, energy bill savings tips, and resume tips.



The fair takes place on Saturday, April 4th, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Olympia High School, 1302 North Street in Olympia. For more information, please visit the event website at http://volunteer.ws/economic_fair or you can call Emma at 360-741-2610. For transportation assistance, please call Mary at 360-741-2613.

For those of you in Pierce County who can't make it to the fair, you can always get assistance by [visiting the Pierce County Community Action Program website.](#)

In closing...

Again, if you'd like to share your concerns with me or ask me a question, please feel free to send me an e-mail to becker.randi@leg.wa.gov. You can also visit my legislative website at www.SenateRepublicans.wa.gov/Becker, where you'll find a link to my [sponsored bills](#) where you can keep track of what I'm doing. **And please consider forwarding this e-mail to anyone you think might be interested in receiving it. Ask them to contact me so I can add them to my distribution list.**

I look forward to your comments and suggestions on these issues or anything else coming before the Legislature. My office phone number is (360) 786-7602, or you can write me at 115B Irv Newhouse Building, Olympia, WA 98504. Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving you in the Washington State Senate. It is truly an honor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randi Becker".

Randi Becker
2nd District State Senator

